



## Lupang Pangako Community Service

It was barely past eight when our bus finally reached the last leg of the trip -- the tricky path up the mountain. But instead of a typical camping trip, we had planned on something more meaningful that Friday morning.



**Our mission:** To give some school supplies to elementary school pupils, and let them have some fun playing games while we're at it.

**Our destination:** [Lupang Pangako](#). It's the area at the top of a mountain in Brgy. Amungan, Iba, Zambales where the Aetas affected by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991 were relocated. It was almost a two-hour journey from Subic where the office and most of [IROG Foundation's](#) volunteers are based. To say that the road to Sitio Lupang



Pangako was not easily accessible would be an absolute understatement. However, that didn't take away the fun of the road trip from us. (Though I suspect our bus driver and his sidekick would say otherwise.)



Thankfully, the children still looked excited when we got to the school, even with our rather late arrival. And with kids being kids, it was not hard getting them all fired up for outdoor games. They had fun playing, especially in the Flour Game where they had to puff on a bowl of flour to find an item buried underneath without using their hands. You can just imagine the racket that would ensue when five kids were to do this simultaneously on the same bowl! Yep, hilarious chaos. The boys' team found it so amusing to have flour-faces that they were laughing at each other even after the game.

Another really fun game was the Fish Race where they had to make the paper fish travel around an obstacle by fanning it with a folder. Somebody commented that perhaps by the time the game ends, that paper fish will be no more. True enough, halfway through the game, the "fish" was barely recognizable in its crumpled form. But what really cracked people up were those kids who were seriously trying to 'fan' the paper fish but were, humorously enough, only hitting sand.

They also had turns playing **Calamansi Relay** and **Ball Relay**. You could tell there was unmistakable competitiveness between the teams when by the end of each game the winning team would jump around and do victory shouts -- **talk about unlimited energy!**





We also gave out trinkets and small toys that seemed to be greatly appreciated by them. In fact, you'd hardly see any pupils who were not sporting either a colorful hairband or a pair of sunglasses.

Their teachers were also commendable for their dedication in their job, especially because they're working way out of their comfort zones. It's not easy teaching hyperactive children to line up properly even for a food distribution, but with a little help, the team managed it.



During break time, we couldn't help but smile when every kid said a "thank you" while we handed them snacks. After everyone got their share, there were still some leftovers so we decided to give seconds to some of the kids nearby. It proved to be a bad call on our part because we totally got mobbed by the rest of the kids in a matter of seconds! (It's a real funny scene where our pleads of "**hold on**" were lost on their "**me too**". I see now we should have asked them to line up again for seconds. **Lesson learned.**)

While eating their snacks, for some reason, we noticed the kids were all gathering in the middle of the field. I was still trying to figure it out when some of the lively boys suddenly went on an impromptu **dance showdown!** (Like I said, unlimited energy.)

We managed to have small talks with some of them, albeit limited to what-is-your-name and how-old-are-you kind of conversations. But just as some were too shy to talk, you could tell they love the camera as they gamely smiled and waved.

**It's a real blessing to see them enjoying themselves like all kids should.**

Somehow, the counterintuitive notion of "**the more you give, the more you receive**" had been proven true once again. Because as our bus started to leave the school that afternoon, **I can't help but think we've already received our reward: 200 smiling faces.**